

SOUTHERN CALIFORNIA ASSOCIATION OF GOVERNMENTS
“SCAG”
INCOMING PRESIDENT
GENERAL ASSEMBLY ADDRESS
MAY 3, 2007

Good afternoon and thank you for being here today to participate in the 2007 SCAG General Assembly. I want to thank Supervisor Burke for all of her hard work and her efforts to move SCAG forward on a number of fronts during her term as President.

Ladies and Gentlemen, as elected officials in Southern California, you and I are blessed with the opportunity to lead one of the region's most important organizations at a time when our decisions can have an enormous impact on the quality of life for all of us in the Southern California Association of Governments region. **Let me explain where we are and what challenges we must overcome.**

In the words of Elizabeth Dole, “Life is not just a few years to spend in self-indulgence and career advancement. It is a privilege, a responsibility, a stewardship to be lived according to a much higher calling.” As I turn 60 today, my teaching and coaching careers behind me, I look to make a real difference in my community, our SCAG community. I am sure that you share that sentiment.

Throughout my lifetime, Southern California has been among the most dynamic regions on earth. Where else has a community been transformed by the absorption of so many people, from so many countries, into such a small geographic area, while simultaneously building one of history's strongest economies and fostering an enviable “California Life Style”.

Some examples include: our dominant position in the United States when considering international trade. Our quality of life is the envy of the world because of our beaches, mountains, deserts and weather and the opportunities those positives provide. Technology and innovation have been the hallmark here, while our outstanding universities are known for important research and the exportation of knowledge and culture to exchange students from around the globe. Our “City of Angels” has earned many championships as home to the Dodgers, the Lakers and the Trojans and Bruins. Coach Wooden said “Be more concerned with your character than with your reputation, because your character is what you really are; while your reputation is merely what others think you are.” And from Coach John McKay, “I am a big believer in the mirror test. All that matters is if you can look in the mirror and honestly tell the person you see there, that you've done your best.” There is much we can learn from our past successes, mentors and especially the championships of our city that can lead us into the tests ahead. We are a sports capital, an entertainment capital and a recreation and tourism capital as well. We are champions and can take on any challenges. **This is where we are.**

Now we must look forward to the issues that stand in the path of our region's future success. In other words, **what challenges we must overcome.** To be candid, Southern California's lifestyle and future prosperity require that this organization succeed with a complex and comprehensive agenda.

- ❖ We must plan, finance and build the infrastructure, not only for the enormous international trade of 2007, but also the capacity for the tremendous increase in the goods movement for the future.

- ❖ We must focus national attention on the emergency we are facing with the PM 2.5 effects on the air we breathe, which annually accounts for over 5,400 premature deaths, 2,400 hospitalizations, 140,000 cases of asthma and other respiratory diseases and 980,000 lost work days in the South Coast Air Basin.
- ❖ We must solve the housing shortage for the future if we are to assist the middle class in home ownership and a piece of the American Dream rather than life-long rentals.
- ❖ We must assist the workers of the future in obtaining the training necessary in a competitive global economy. Disturbingly, over 44 per cent of Southern Californians have never taken a college class.
- ❖ We must lead the way in fostering environmentally friendly technologies to mitigate the issues of our air and water pollution, as well as fueling our workforce and industry. And if those issues sound daunting, we have to carve out time to make our voices heard in Washington, DC as the next reauthorization of SAFETEA-LU is considered. We also need to continue the efforts at the state level to get our share of the Bond Implementation funds. And of course, on the horizon is the Regional Transportation Plan, the Regional Comprehensive Plan, and the newly adopted Public Participation Plan. This is the short list of the challenges we need to overcome.

As we embark on a new year of important planning, let me recommend the SCAG Leadership Academy offered by the University of Southern California. As a participant I am encouraged by the valuable insights, ideas and training which suggests new approaches aimed at enhancing leadership skills and expertise in regional planning. Skills which will better equip us as we start our new year.

An important discussion scheduled for the Retreat on June 7 and 8 at Lake Arrowhead will be an evaluation of the structure and effectiveness of SCAG. Is our present structure the most efficient for the many tasks of this next year and beyond? And what do our colleagues at the federal and state levels think of us?

In closing, let me again thank and celebrate Supervisor Burke's presidency and commitment to this organization. Ladies and gentlemen, I have discussed **where we are and what challenges we must overcome** to move into a prosperous new era. I look to the collective skills, ideas, experience and innovation you bring to this organization. President Eisenhower said, "There is nothing wrong with America that the faith, love of freedom, intelligence and energy of her citizens cannot cure." I look forward to working with you to secure our future and to find the cures that will make us once again the "envy" of the world. Thank you and God Bless You.